ELIZABETH EDWARDS OF HENLLAN

Elizabeth Edwards was the daughter of Evan Edwards, a labourer at Erivat Hall in Henllan, Denbighshire. She was baptised there on 17 November 1749.
She had three illegitimate children who were all baptised at Denbigh parish church – Mary on 12 October 1766, Isaac on 4 April 1769 and Thomas on 28 July 1777. There is no further definite record of Elizabeth in the area.

On 20 May 1782 her daughter Mary married Robert Price in Denbigh. Their first child Mary was born the next year, and was baptised on 5 April 1783. At her subsequent marriage in Denbigh, this daughter was described as *Mary Price spinster of this parish, daughter of Robert Price breeches maker by Mary his wife formerly M Edwards*. Robert and Mary had six further children in Denbigh, although two died in infancy. The fifth child, Frances, was baptised in Denbigh on 23 May 1790.

There is no further record of Isaac Edwards until 1806, when he was a stonemason living in Halkyn, Flintshire, under the name Isaac Jones, age 37. It is possible he was pauper apprenticed there, but I have not yet found any record of it. There are some indications he may have fathered one or more illegitimate children there before this, but again no records exist.

On 26 June 1806, Isaac married Sarah Williams at Halkyn. The parish register entry is very detailed – *"Isaac Jones age 35, natural son of John Mostyn of Denbigh Esq and Elizabeth Edwards of the parish of Denbigh, and Sarah of this parish widow daughter of Robert Williams of Rithen and Anne his wife by licence"* The parish register image is on Ancestry and Findmypast, and the licence is at the National Library of Wales.

This is the only historic evidence that John Mostyn Esq was the father of any of Elizabeth Edwards' three children. However, it would not be surprising if Elizabeth had been in service at the Mostyn town house, which still stands in Vale Street, Denbigh, very close to Erivat Hall. There she may have had her children by John Mostyn, who had been a widower since the age of 48 in 1764. Circumstantially, though, in 1799, Robert and Mary Price were tenants of John Meredith Mostyn, John's grandson, and Isaac and his son repeatedly used the name Meredith for their children.

DNA support for the theory is hard to come by. John Mostyn's legitimate descendants would be half fifth cousins of mine, which is quite distant for sharing DNA, and most come from well-established families, for whom DNA testing would have more downside than upside.

John Meredith Mostyn was somewhat infamous as having eloped to Gretna Green and married Cecilia Thrale, a well-known society lady. There is considerable detail about them on the internet.

Isaac died in 1822, and was buried in Halkyn churchyard. He had three children - Isaac, from whom I am descended, Mary and Meredith. Isaac Jones junior was a miner, and married Elizabeth Roberts at Halkyn in 1829. They has seven children, including Owen, my great grandfather born 1844, and Sarah, David's great grandmother, born 1842. The family with the older children can be found on the 1841 census in the lead mining village of Moel-y-Crio, near Halkyn. Isaac junior died in 1845 of consumption, and Elizabeth married again, to Peter Jones, had more children, and died in 1887. Her gravestone, with that of her second husband, still stands in Halkyn churchyard.

Owen Jones moved to Llanengan on the Lleyn peninsula, still in North Wales, where he worked as a lead miner. He had five children before his tragic death in a mining accident in 1885. One of his children, Isaac, moved to South Wales where he worked on the underground railway in a coal mine. He was my mother's father.

I have copy certificates for all the births, marriages and deaths of this line of the family, together with the census records and all the original parish register references.

Elizabeth Edwards third child, Thomas, was a potseller. He married Sarah Morris in Denbigh in 1783, and they had two children who survived infancy. Their son Israel joined the British Army and served in Canada, where he later settled with his family.

Looking further back, John Mostyn was born at Segrwyd Hall, Llanrhaeadr-yn-Nghinmerch, Denbighshire in 1716. He married his cousin Margaret Mostyn and had six legitimate children with her, before her death in 1764.

John was credited with the introduction of woollen cloth manufacture to Denbigh. His venture was of limited success, however, and he wrote about it in detail in a privately published book, a copy of which is in the National Library of Wales. I have a transcription. As well as Segrwyd Hall, John owned a townhouse in Denbigh, which has recently been restored.

The Mostyns had gained ownership of Segrwyd on the marriage of John's father, also John, to Jane Dolben. The Dolbens had owned the estate for centuries. After the battle of Blackheath in 1497,

Robert Dolben was given the demesne of Segrwyd by King Henry VII for his service at Blackheath and his voyage to Exeter.

John's father Henry was undersheriff of Denbigh, although he lived in Merionethshire, and Henry's father was William Mostyn, Archdeacon of Bangor, whose parents were Sir Roger Mostyn, knighted in 1606, and Mary, daughter of Sir John Wynne of Gwydyr.

The Mostyn and Wynne families were extensive landowners in North Wales. The town of Mostyn boasts Mostyn Hall, the Mostyn family seat, and a later Lord Mostyn founded the town of Llandudno. Both families were intensely interested in their ancestry. The then Lord Mostyn wrote a substantial book in 1925, detailing the history of the family. Sir John Wynne himself also wrote a book – History of the Gwydyr Family- which was reprinted recently and may still be available. Both pedigrees are also recorded in Griffith's Pedigrees of Anglesey and Caernarvonshire and in various places online. They show family trees going back to such luminaries as Llewelyn the Great, Prince of Wales, and Hywel Dda, the king of Wales who first codified Welsh law. They also establish links to the Plantagenet Kings of England.

The Welsh historically used patronymic names often until the eighteenth century, but the Mostyn family adopted their anglicised surname very early, when "*Thomas ap Richard ap Howel ap Ieuan Vychan, being so called before Rowland Lee Bishop of Litchfield and Coventry and Lord President of the [Council of the] Marches of England and Wales at a great Session held in Flintshire in the year of our Lord 1539, the Lord President commanded that afterward [he] should be always called Thomas Mostyn of the House where he lived at, and was the first [of his family] that was called by the Name of Mostyn.*"

These pedigrees can be followed back to characters from the Dark Ages, such as Beli Mawr and Coel Hen (Old King Cole), but the further back one goes, the more fact and fable become intertwined, particularly in the Welsh pedigrees, which were often used to establish rights of Lordship and Kingship. However, our descent from Llewelyn the Great of Wales and King Edward III of England is quite convincingly established. That in itself is not unusual; it is said that almost everyone with any English blood is a direct descendant of Edward III. What is unusual is being able to establish the link from primary or otherwise reliable sources.